

An Apology for Fairy Tales

Folk lore represents art, fantasy, religion—a safety valve of which the child should not be deprived.

FRITZ WITTELS

WHETHER there still are grandmothers who relate fairy tales to their children, I do not know. However that may be now, from time immemorial it has always been the fond privilege of grandparents to spoil their children's children. Parents and teachers educate them to fit reality. And this creates the need for the consolation that there is a way out of grim actuality leading to a world more congruent with themselves, fairyland, the open sesame to which can be obtained only from people who themselves are no longer so inexorably connected with our reality, such as elderly people or those of the negroid races.

Fairy tales have always presented a problem to pedagogy in that they check the regular flow of education. The fairy tale does its best to be social. The good are always rewarded, evil-doers are invariably meted out their just deserts. Yet in its essence the fairy tale is rebellious, indulging in cruelty, insubordination, even debauchery, and the moral which inevitably appears at its tail end is but a thin veneer. Education, on the other hand, does not only lead the young to ethics; its chief purpose is to make them logical and judicious. It is in school they are taught that invariably and under all conditions two times two are four. In the school of life they are constrained to acknowledge boundaries, all kinds of weights and measures. Their primitive mind is forced into Spanish boots which even adults cannot permanently endure. Adults place their religion, their art, their dreams between themselves and the measuring world. To the child the fairy tale represents art, fantasy, religion—shock absorbers all.

Through the instrument of psychoanalysis, we have become aware that we attain the requisites of

culture by the repression of our unfulfillable and anti-cultural desires. These repressed wishes, however, continue to exist in the unconscious part of our minds and reappear in many varied and frequently unrecognizable forms. Children's play is a manifestation of one of these re-appearing forms. The fairy tale is another. The child becomes omnipotent through its fantasy. The fairy tale in its lovely innocence is in harmony with the mind of the child, compromising the wishes of the child with the demands of ethics. The weak and the poor smash giants and kill villains; good men and true who die unjustly re-awake to live forever; orphans are re-united with their parents. Thus we perceive that the fairy tale is an outlet, a safety valve of which the child should not be divested. Indeed, it would be futile to try to do so. For the child in his need would create new fairy tales out of his own fantasies, wild products of emergency, which would fail to fulfill the aim of the fairy tale with the same utility as do the old motifs, stamped into relatively few forms for countless ages. The fairy tale and its popularity are by no means artificial products. It is grown like life itself forming a part of life.

Every child considers his mother good and bad at the same time. Hence, in fairy tales there are good fairies and bad stepmothers or witches. Fairies are infinitely superior and mightier than mother could ever hope to be. Stepmothers in fables are more cruel than the meanest mother; and what is more, they are always allotted the punishment they deserve. The father in real life is powerful and terrible, but the dragons, giants and man-eaters of the fables are defeated by the little heroes, albeit they are more fearsome than any father could possibly be. The heroes of the tale, with whom the

child identifies himself, attain royal honors, rule the spirits of King Solomon, and all the treasures of the world are bestowed upon them. In this way the fairy tale brings never-ending comfort to the child. Reality is hard to endure, but happily there is always another world to which the child may repair, where logic, ethics, everything real is out of joint, capsized in the most delightful fashion, and thus far educational powers do not seriously intervene. After all, it is only a fairy tale, only a dream, and we see our children awaken with bright eyes, returning to reality with no difficulty. They require the reflecting mirror of the fable so that they may visualize themselves as they would like to be: beloved and praised by all, powerful, cruel—but guiltless always.

One of the chief values of the fairy tale for the evolution of an harmonious personality resides in its variety. The child would be beset with constant anxiety or fear were the fables to abound only in the cruelty of witches and dragons. But there is delicious humor invariably concealed in the tale which mitigates the most frightful events. Even death is not irrevocable and above all one thing is certain—nothing can happen, we are eternal like nature in which the fairy tale breathes. When an educator observes that a child displays a decided preference for a certain form of fable, let us say that which relates of extreme cruelty or sentimentality, intervention is necessary as it may be a manifestation of an incipient anxiety state or obsession of some kind. It is not my intent to imply that it is the fable which causes the neurosis. Such behavior on the part of the child merely indicates that he has a tendency to develop one-sidedly because of inner experiences and conflicts. Where there is present a neurotic conflict, medical pedagogy must be resorted to. Generally aid comes from the treasure of the fable itself, from its endless variety. The fairy tale leads the child out of its impasse into the beautiful green pastures.

Traditions Are Not Machine-made

It is a conjecture whether or not our old motifs are still useful. They are age-old inventions of farmers for little and big children handed down from generation to generation; hence they contain nothing of the achievements of our technical, democratic era. The unchangeable motifs of the fairy tale are spun around dragons, miracles, fathers, mothers, stepchildren, orphans, unfortunates and other stock characters. The situation is rural, plain, and to the city child frequently almost

incomprehensible. One day for a test in a Viennese school, the children were told the tale of *Hans in Luck* and asked to give their opinions anent it. Hans serves his master faithfully for many years and receives as compensation a big lump of gold. The lump is very heavy and Hans is glad of the opportunity to get rid of it by exchanging it for a horse. He becomes thirsty and exchanges the horse for a cow which gives him sweet milk. Later he exchanges the cow for a pig, the pig for a goose, the goose for a grindstone, always so that his burden may be lightened. Finally, the grindstone falls into a well and Hans is perfectly happy. Now he has nothing left and can at last go through life without a burden.

It is problematical whether the school is the proper place in which to use a fairy tale as a subject for examination. The idea this tale conveys is, "Don't be clever, don't be careful and thrifty, the happiest man is the tramp who possesses nothing." This philosophy is congruent with the genuine conviction of the child, but unfortunately it is at variance with the aims of Western civilization. Like that of all similar tales, the motive of this tale is a thing apart from the school and its teachings, so that its essence must be discovered by the child casually. Small wonder that these Viennese school children displayed such an interesting form of resistance. They protested against the lump of gold, maintaining that Hans should have received his compensation in currency. These eight-year-old city-bred children were quite aware that uncoined gold plays no role in payment traffic. And why did he purchase a horse? Why didn't he buy a car? They considered it nonsensical to buy a cow to quench one's thirst. Hans could have obtained milk at any street corner. And so the protestations went on. The children finally suggested as substitutions the following—currency, car, motorcycle, bicycle, skates.

To all appearances this test would indicate that our fairy tales are in need of modernization. My own opinion, however, is that the children were not protesting against the payment in gold and the cow so much as they were against the place and manner in which they were served with the tale. At school they became children of their environment; they turned the tables and played reasonable, technically progressive persons. Of necessity the teacher is and has to be inexorably connected with reality. By this I do not mean that he should not be permitted to tell fairy tales at all. Indeed, he could utilize a spare hour to excellent advantage by relating fairy tales, thus assuring the children that

he too is one of them and fully cognizant of their need for an escape into a world all their own. But I do not consider it wise to use a fairy tale as though it were an integral part of the school.

While I am constrained to admit that the medieval and baroque style of the fairy tale does not quite conform with the mentality of the city child, I do not see how this can be helped. Many have endeavored to modernize fairy tales but the results have seldom been satisfactory. A mysterious and naturally grown formation like the fairy tale can be changed and revived but slowly and in a natural and mysterious way. Even great poets have failed in this attempt. Rarely, if ever, did their artistic fables become popular in the nursery, save for the tales of that wonder story teller, Hans Christian Andersen. Some tales disappear because we no

longer comprehend them. They may resurrect but we do not know when and where. Airplanes, U-boats, wireless are actualities; therefore they are antipodal to the fairy realm and have no rightful place in its tales. They cannot stand the competition of flying rugs and horses, of spirits who storm through the air with the speed of light. Our technical achievements are still too young, too insufficiently coalesced with nature; the fairy realm shrinks from accepting them.

We arrive at the conclusion that the garden of fairy tales cannot be uprooted by our commissaries of progressive education. We might almost say about them what a Pope replied when complaints were raised against the Jesuits, "*Sint ut sunt aut non sint.*" *Let them be as they are or let them not be.*

Shall We Read to Our Children?

DOROTHY W. BARUCH

SHALL we read to our children? Shall we read with them? Shall we tell them stories? All three questions are in reality one and the same. Each amounts to a sharing of organized language with our children and can be significant only in so far as the experience is meaningful to them as well as to us.

What factors enter here? Obviously any story material to be meaningful to a child must interest him. But in addition it should be contributing, it should be of constructive rather than detrimental value in his adjustment to life. Nor is this "adjustment to life" a narrow moralistic term. Neither is it one that has to do only with large and important issues. In its highest development it involves a feeling of harmony born of personal integration. It encompasses all those elements which loose and let flourish and expand a being's natural capacities into channels where he may find the fullest satisfactions. It embodies anything, no matter how small, that makes living freer and happier.

There are so many ways in which reading can enrich life and personality. None of us will minimize joyousness as an ingredient of the good life, nor the amount of it to be found in contact with books. None of us will deny the need for

restful moments in this fast age, nor the relaxation that comes with reading. None will fail to recognize the importance of steering a clearseeing course in this complicated world, nor the contribution of books in increasing orientation, first through enriching knowledge of the world close at hand, and later through widening vistas. Neither will any of us lose sight of the way ambitions and ideals, sympathy, tolerance and understanding can grow through imaginative visioning born or fostered in reading.

But some of us will perhaps lose sight of the fact that there may also be disadvantages entailed in reading. Obviously there is that of sheer boredom! But more. How about the chance for misinterpretations and consequent confusion? How about the possible outcome of failure to keep an adequate sense of values where discernment is too immature to grasp material? How about a too intense identification with characters and capacities so beyond one's own, that futile expectations and thwartings may ensue? And the danger, too, of using reading as a means of escape from facing reality into a dream-world that substitutes for actual living and doing? One must always keep in mind that reading should supplement experience in-

stead of substituting for it. It should never furnish escape that admits of no returning, but rather flight that makes return more pleasant. It should not cover over and block out necessary spots, but should enlarge and fill in an all around, varied patterning.

And yet we often fail to stop to look whether or not our reading to children is being meaningful and contributing. We rush ahead. We select a book because it is "the thing to read," because it has been recommended, because it has "literary merit." We do this instead of watching and watching, to see, in so far as we are able, what part reading is playing in our children's living.

How Parents Read Between the Lines

READING to children gives opportunity to watch their immediate responses to various types of material. Even the two- and three-year-olds have ways of showing whether or not they are truly interested, and whether or not material is meaningful and understandable to them. Watch their faces. In smiles of appreciation, focused and attentive eyes, confirming nods of the head, or in expressions that picturesquely reflect the mood of the narration we find their interest being communicated to us. Whereas vague and wandering looks, puzzled frowns, and the like can equally well portray a lack of interest or understanding.

Watch their bodies, too. Hands and even feet beating time or making gestures, bodies bent forward eagerly, or pulled back in distaste, general repose as against a jiggling restlessness—all these bring indications.

And listen to what they say. "Yeh," with joyous relish, or "I did that too," with a warmth of recognition, or a rhythmic joining in of some such resounding phrase as "bang went the hammer, bang, bang, bang," or the eager insertion of voluntary contributions, such as continuing an enumeration of different kinds of vegetables with "and carrots, and celery and *no spinach*," or any other verbalization that is pertinent to the story content—all these clearly and irrefutably show a story's meaningfulness to its hearers. Remarks about tying a shoe while a story about a bird is under way, on the other hand, show a lack of interest, as does also any other verbalization that deals with subject matter aside from story content.

The two-year-old who listens to how "the rain came down pitter patter onto the big truck" and who breaks in with a comprehending, "Yes, it rained on the potatoes," shows that he is able to take the story material and fit it into his life and

into his experience. A two-year-old hears another three-year-old's story.

"I blew my nose.
I blew it one way,
I blew it another way,
I blew it off.
My nose!"*

In response he laughs and exclaims, "Not really. It's tucked on!" He is showing that he can relegate the material to its proper place in his existence and that in consequence it does not confuse. But the three-year-old who looks in sudden fear at an interrupting knock on the door with a fearful, "Wolf's coming," shows a confusion resulting from too complex material.

But watching responses during reading is not enough. We must in addition watch the way reading carries over into the lives of our children and the way they use what has been read.

The four-year-old who has been an "eating problem" and who listens to a story of another little boy and what he does at the table and then carries over into his own eating situation a volunteering of, "I can eat like Bobby Joe," and does, shows that the story is helping him in a reconstruction of habits. The seven-year-old who, after hearing about Peter and Wendy, pensively discloses that "the way Tink feels jealous to Wendy when she pinches her, that's the way I feel to brother," shows that the story is helping her to talk out and clarify attitudes in her own life. The twelve-year-old who voraciously reads, both silently and aloud, romances and epics, and then out of the mass chooses selections for staging in her own puppet theater, shows that she uses reading as an incentive to activity and as a path toward creative expression. But the shy and timid boy of thirteen who spends hour upon hour with tales of banditry and daredevilish escapades, yet who possesses no friends, and withdraws from every type of contact with his peers—this boy is using reading as a substitute for life, as an ambush into which he can escape.

Answering in the Affirmative

SHALL we read to our children?

Assuredly and yes—if and when what we read can be fundamentally meaningful. For then the shared experience will be contributing, not only to our children, but to us as well through its intrinsic opportunity for communion and insight.

* From "Blimps and Such" by Dorothy W. Baruch to be published in 1932 by Harper & Bros. 150 pp. \$2.00.

On Children and Their Reading

SIDONIE MATSNER GRUENBERG

THE invention of printing made possible, at least in theory, the opening to all men of the intellectual treasures of all times. A major effort of Western civilization in the intervening centuries was directed toward the universal diffusion of literacy. Today we expect every child not only to be able to read, but to read a great deal on his own initiative, for his own satisfaction, to his own improvement.

Some of us hope, through the selection of appropriate books, to make our children's reading interests serve for the cultivation of taste or morals. We overlook the fact that we begin with an individual child who already has definite dispositions in one direction or another. A book which thrills some children will bore others. One wants to roam in fancy to the farthest reaches of Never-neverland; another finds satisfaction in the direct narrative of children like himself doing familiar things in familiar settings and in familiar ways.

This is not to say that we are therefore to abandon everything to predestination, or to the fatalism of the geneticists. Reading as behavior is at least in part determined by the "background" and experience of the particular child at the given moment; and books and reading are important factors in the further growth of backgrounds.

Unless we recognize individual variation, however, we are in danger of assuming that we can select in advance the "best" books for boys or girls of a given age, or the best sequence of books that every child should read. We are likely also to rely too confidently upon the books with which we are already familiar, and to attempt to impose upon children our own tastes and standards, not to say limitations; thus we set up barriers to development.

From the child's own choice of books we may sometimes discover the trends of his interests and development. These we may hope to widen into remoter fields, opening up higher levels of understanding and appreciation. It may be advisable occasionally to arouse curiosity by means of an attractive book that leads in a new direction. In reading, as in the conduct of life, the first impulse

of parents seems always to be to prohibit, to restrict, to censor. But without prohibiting even trashy books, they can suggest a wide variety which comes within the child's experience.

As parents we should be alert to sense, in the child's spontaneous sampling of accessible books, any indications of his problems. From these, in turn, often come opportunities for helpful conversations and discussions. Constant pre-occupation with a particular kind of book may furnish a clue to a more or less significant underlying problem.

Gilbert was addicted to fairy tales. It appeared that he was specializing in stories in which the hero always triumphed through magic. The magic carpet took him whithersoever he wished, with no effort on his part. Obviously Gilbert was resorting to these tales as an escape from the difficulties and tribulations of a harsh world. Gilbert's mother wanted to take away these books and see to it that he got no others of that kind. His father was sure that Gilbert would outgrow this taste; had he not himself liked fairy tales when he was Gilbert's age? Neither attitude covered the whole situation, for the fact that Gilbert read these stories was merely an indication that he was a particular kind of person. Taking away from him his "escape literature" would not solve his problems; neither would it help him to ignore this need for escape. There was needed rather an effort to bring him into harmony with his surroundings, to give him confidence in himself as he attacked his difficulties, to stimulate his interest in doing something "real."

Of the many criticisms recently leveled at the fairy tale one of the most telling comes ostensibly from "science," which means here the modern pre-occupation with the material world and its workings. Hence the recent emphasis upon "true" stories.

Children do derive deep comfort out of stories in which they can find themselves among familiar scenes and processes; but certainly they need not forever be restricted to the familiar. City children often find stories about animals and birds and tractors interesting after they have outgrown stories about autos and trolleys and fire engines.

Country children, on the other hand, may tire of chickens and cows and silos and want to read about trains and fire engines and big buildings. To be satisfying, the text must apparently offer a secure anchorage in the familiar; but the thrill comes from the excursion into the new.

Another source of concern to adults is the problem of "classics" in the child's reading. There is often expressed the fear that the vast supply of modern and current reading will deprive children of the classical heritage. Characters that have survived from legends and folk tales, as well as from more or less authentic history, have become inseparable from our cultural heritage, so that even current speech and writing are full of allusions to them or to the types they represent—Shylock and Samson, Hamlet and Job, Ulysses and Faust. We need not expect the child to absorb all of his education at one time, or to complete it at a given date. There is no harm if Sinbad and Alice are acquired after David Copperfield and Becky Sharp. Nor need we insist that when the child does become interested in Macbeth or Adam Bede he must therefore read *all* of Shakespeare or George Eliot.

The Story With a Moral

A COMMON relic of the ancient doctrines regarding reading is found in the demand, which still persists, that children should be permitted to read only such books as carry good "morals." The disposition to make books thoroughly instructive is sometimes carried too far. A book about a little girl and her adventures, published originally as a textbook, was later offered as a general reading book. In one of the stories the little girl was planning to go on a picnic. Her grandmother called her early in the morning. She responded with alacrity, made up her bed hurriedly, and rushed off to the picnic. Here comes a footnote gloss; of course she should not have rushed off like that; she should have aired her bed before making it up!

This question of the relation between reading and conduct is a source of deep concern to parents. We are constantly afraid that "bad" books will have bad effects, and equally hopeful that "good" books will have good effects. Perhaps both our hopes and our fears are excessive and misplaced. Some time ago rather violent protests were aroused by a book for boys in which the hero spent some time in a lumber camp, amid drinking and fighting and other inelegancies. The protesters assumed of course that the evil companions of the hero

would affect unfavorably the attitudes of the readers. A number of boys who had read the book, on being asked what they thought of this, said in effect, "reading about swearing doesn't make a fellow swear, any more than reading about praying makes him pray. Of course, if a fellow wants to swear, he might learn some new lines."

Can we not be confident that our earlier "good" influences will provide an armor of defense against evil suggestions? Neither conduct nor attitudes carry over so simply and directly. Moreover, we must recognize that reading about "evil" characters may have special value for the protected child, as perhaps his only means of discovering the obscure and confused motivations that he cannot experience directly. The villain is quite as necessary for the elemental drama as the hero; and the child whose personal contacts and reading have been confined to heroic men and women, whether classic or contemporary, is going to be badly handicapped.

The grading of fiction presents a special problem, both because fiction is pedagogically much more effective than didactic literature, and because it concerns itself usually with aspects of life that we seek to keep from our children as long as possible. The second reason has often made us deprive children of the major benefits of fiction, as orientation in human relations and character.

Here is part of a composition by a boy of fourteen about books he had been reading the year before—in this case *Les Misérables* and *Giants in the Earth*, two books, a "classic" and a "modern," which we would hardly choose for the leisure reading of children of that age, books which we would consider too solemn, too depressing, which we would certainly not think of grouping together.

"The two characters are Javert, from Hugo's *Les Misérables*, and Per Hansa, from O. E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. They are characters, both of them, which have interested and impressed me, and yet are very different. Their chief likeness is in the fact that either would give all he had for what he thought or believed was right.

"An interesting thing about these two men is the fact that both of them died through what they thought the most of. Javert was forced to commit suicide. He suddenly became partially human, and this was his undoing.

"Per Hansa died in a more dramatic fashion.... it would be death to any one who went after the minister in that weather. His wife..... taunted him, and he left the house in a fury."

We can never estimate what children will get out of a particular book; they often think more deeply than we are likely to suspect from anything

they say or do. On the other hand, they also slough off much that may give us misgiving, and go straight to what they find significant—and that the elders have missed entirely.

We have to ask ourselves, continually, what should reading do for us. It has been said that the greatest contribution of reading is that of vicarious experience. If that is so—and I, for one, believe it is—then we might almost say that the further we roam away from home in our reading,

the greater is the contribution to our cultural advancement and our pleasure.

Children must be expected to outgrow books as they outgrow games; but it is impossible to schedule all available books for an ideal sequence of reading. The time to read a particular book is when it is interesting to the reader. At the same time an abundance of good books increases the likelihood that there will always be at hand one that fits both the interest and the need for further growth.

Reading as Emotional Experience

Individual families, like individual people, will cultivate their own particular attitudes and preferences in reading. The wide range of the author's tastes will encourage other parents to re-examine their family reading standards.

FLOYD DELL

READING is important in children's lives, not only as a preliminary use of the great key of knowledge, but immediately as an art-enjoyment. All of the arts minister to our human emotional needs by fulfilling our more impractical wishes symbolically in socially agreeable ways, in giving harmless freedom to repressed impulses and in refining the raw material of our unconscious fantasies.

Fairy tales are, or may be, very useful in these respects. The current popular half-humanized animal stories, which may seem feebly unimaginative to adult tastes, appear to serve these purposes very well. The child from two to six years of age, in addition to crude fantasies of many kinds, has a burden of repressed resentments against his parents which often appears in nightmares involving animals. The identification of himself and his parents with animal figures seems to follow some innate symbolic tendency of the mind. The nightmares represent painful attempts to work out his own emotional situations. Animal stories appear to do the same thing for him more satisfactorily. The animal stories contain, in a more rationalized form, the same elements of love and hatred, flight and escape and reconciliation, which the nightmare

crudely provides. What every good story does for any of us, child or adult, is in Milton's phrase "to reconcile the ways of God to man," or in the child's world to reconcile him to his parents over certain emotional obstacles. The more remote the story is from the actual parent-child situation and the more completely the actualities are disguised, the more fully can the emotional material be dramatized and the more satisfactorily worked out.

It is wrong to object to lack of realism in the half-humanized animal stories, or to giants, wolves, killings and magic in the fairy stories. All these artistic fantasies are useful in refining the cruder fantasies of the child's unconscious mind. Nevertheless all fairy tales are not good, and some are objectionable. Grimm's *Household Tales*, for example, is not a child's book, but a scientific collection of folk tales. Some of these are among the best children's tales we have, but others are unfit to be read to young children, being tales intended by parents of a previous period to frighten their children. We no longer want to fill the night with hobgoblins for our children, and parents may need to exercise some censorship upon books of fairy tales. The Lang collections are admirable, and so are most modern books of selections made for children, but

Grimm unedited is not a book to be read from freely to young children. There is also a little book called, I think, *Struwwelpeter*, representing the worst German parental taste of an earlier day. This can profitably be destroyed by parents when brought to the children by some misguided uncle or aunt; one of its pages tells of a little boy who bit his finger nails, and so a doctor is brought in who cuts off the little boy's fingers with an enormous pair of scissors! Fortunately, contemporary books for children are generally free from these moralistic, sadistic-masochistic horrors.

The child needs, however, rich emotional material in his stories. After he begins to read for himself, his range will be restricted by his unfamiliarity with "long words"; but in the period in which he is being read to, he can enjoy a good deal of what is ordinarily considered adult fiction, poetry and drama. He may not understand the long words, but he can understand courage, fear, hope, struggle, love and hate. Many adult masterpieces have sufficient good simple melodrama in them to satisfy children's appetites. A child of five may enjoy *Androcles and the Lion* along with the *Uncle Wiggly* stories and his favorite newspaper comics. The needs of children in reading do not quite fit in with the age-schemes of reading matter, and it should be made easy for them to make excursions as the fancy takes them into adult books or back into the literature of infancy. When a child accustomed to draw no hard and fast line in his reading matter comes to reading for himself, he may confine himself for the most part to children's books, but will occasionally pick up an adult novel or biography and read half of it with genuine interest. To praise a child for reading adult books might perhaps make him priggish; but to have

free, uncommented-upon range of all the books in the house may give him the opportunity to satisfy emotional needs to which books "for boys of ten" or "for girls of nine" do not adequately minister. I think that parents who enjoy an hour's reading aloud in the evening can sometimes find adult books interesting to their growing children; reading aloud makes clear many "long words" which baffle the child when he reads by himself. Besides, it is not necessary to understand everything in a book to enjoy it. I happen to enjoy a poem of Kipling's which incidentally says:

"He has stripped my rails
of the shaddock-frails—"

I don't know what "shaddock-frails" are or care.

Children's reading seems to me deficient, perhaps inevitably so, in its reference to the raw facts of contemporary life; and, in my opinion, these are best provided by casual contacts with a daily paper, preferably a sensational one, with all the murders and scandals and bootleg crimes in it. The child, pursuing his favorite comic strip, glances idly at the headlines and gradually and without shock becomes accustomed to the idea that the outside world is what it is.

I cannot undertake to defend here my point of view, which starts with a careful censorship in the nursery against meaningless fear tales, and goes on to suggest that the ordinary reading of children be expanded to include both adult masterpieces on the one hand, and the tabloids on the other. But that point of view is founded upon the understanding that reading is an art. As an art it has its value in expressing the repressed impulses and in refining the crude fantasies of the unconscious mind. It needs to deal in disguised form with all our loves and hates and hopes and fears.

Creative Literature

Writing as well as reading is a natural and spontaneous interest.

HUGHES MEARNS

FOR many weeks, as I have been traveling about the country, I have amused myself by puzzling over the meaning of the title of this paper—creative literature. I didn't choose it myself, you know. We who talk and write rarely have that privilege. Titles are given to us.

It is a nice way. One is asked to address an audience on "The Sulking Child and How to Arouse His Creative Spirit." At that moment, it may be, one doesn't want to address any audience on anything. You are tired of hearing your own voice. You have told all you know long ago, and can't

warm up to repetitions any more. Then you get a title like that. I really did get this one, you know. And you laugh. "The Sulking Child and How to Arouse His Creative Spirit." Well, you can't help thinking about it. Your own creative spirit gets warmed up. First thing you know you have written out an hour lecture and can't wait till you have the chance to talk it somewhere before an audience.

Creative literature. *Creative* is all right. But *literature*! What a cold and unfriendly word, remote from living, quite dead. In conversation we avoid the word, except when we must refer to a school subject by that name. One reason we avoid it, I think, is because we are not sure how to pronounce it. I have heard it said a half dozen ways. Some say lit-er-aye-chure. Some say lit-ruh-chuh. And surely none of us write literature. Literature is something done by famous men like Homer, Dostoevski, Tennyson, Hawthorne. Old persons, you see, or foreign persons, or someone dead a long time. We are not old or foreign or even dead. So we couldn't possibly create literature.

From the Inmost Heart

WELL, children create literature, and never know that they are doing it. And you, no matter what your age, you create literature. You never suspected that, did you? Yet your conversation with a trusted friend is often literature. So are your private, personal letters, when you let yourself go, when you have something of your very own to say and are not afraid to say it. But if, while you wrote on at terrific speed, a scrawl telling a tried and true friend about a thrilling piece of news, gossip maybe or even scandal, I should lean over your shoulder and remark, "Hello, you are creating literature," that would stop that business instantly. The fine fire would go out. The hand would slow down. The words would not come. The real self is easily frightened away.

For literature is only the real self talking. It may be that your real self does not talk much. You may be afraid to tell even yourself what you really feel and think. Your real self, you believe, is no good. You have proof enough. Any time you have ever blurted out what you really think, someone is sure to correct you or tell you to stop. So you spend your life trying to find out what folks like to hear—not what you are eager to tell.

I've always noticed that when an older person appears suddenly among children who are eagerly

talking, the language changes instantly or it stops altogether. It changes to what the children think is good and proper language. Well, that excited mongrel, improper language of children talking to one another, is often creative literature. It may not be the highest grade, of course.

Recently I had the great delight of talking to an audience of young children aged about ten or eleven, who had been encouraged to respect their own fine selves. They were most interested in hearing what a little girl had said to her mother. The little girl was just their age. She often talked quietly to her mother, I told them, as if she were simply talking to herself. And secretly the mother had written down the little girl's words. The real self was talking, I told them, when she said,

"I saw a mountain
And he was like Wotan looking at himself in
the water.
I saw a cockatoo
And he was like sunset clouds.
Even leaves and little stones
Are different to my eyes sometimes.
I keep wondering through and through my
heart
Where all the beautiful things in the world
Come from?
And while I wonder
They go on being beautiful."

At another time the little girl spoke very quietly and very slowly, for she was thinking,

"If I am happy, and you,
And there are things to do,
It seems to be the reason
Of this world!" *

Later the mother put all these quiet sayings in a book. It is called *Poems by a Little Girl*. The little girl's name is Hilda. And all the world reads the quiet sayings of Hilda, great poets and critics, mothers and fathers, teachers, professors, artists. And they all agreed that it was literature. And yet it was only a little girl talking quietly.

"That is poetry," I told my young audience, "that is poetry when you talk quietly to yourself."

I asked them, "Do you ever talk to yourself?" There were many slow noddings of heads, and here and there a low, "Yes."

"Write it down the next time," I said. "It may be poetry."

Even before children are able to write they at-

* From *Poems by a Little Girl*, by Hilda Conkling. Fredk. A. Stokes Co. 1920. \$3.00.

tempt the language of literature. Parents have always known about this; but outsiders make it the subject of their jokes. What the little toddlers say, when the real self speaks, is often strange and even comic to us. We can hardly be blamed sometimes for laughing. A five-year-old steps lightly and daintily on the early morning grass and says seriously,

"I love to walk on the grass
In the morning
When it's—juicy."

Juicy is such a funny word for dew-covered lawn. We laugh. But that laugh is dangerous. It may stop the real self from speaking again.

Our laugh or our correction may drive the native gift of language to hide itself away in private dialogue with doll or toy; or it may carry on solely in the spirited domain of silent dream-life; or it may die out and be lost forever.

Mothers have been aware of this early language gift even more than teachers. Each mother knows that she has a wonder-child, one who talks to her beautifully and strangely in a language adequate for every need, who inquires with intelligence, whose reasoning is direct and wise. It is a great victory for the mother when she can so keep the confidence of her child that the real self will talk out confidently before her. For the real self must grow to be a better self. Just like our bodies it grows through exercise. If we shut it up it will not grow. And it needs the food of our affectionate interest. From Milwaukee a mother sends this excited bedtime talk told to her by her four-year-old boy,

"I have a little airship
And it goes through the woods so high
Through the forest to the sky.
When the lions see it
They run into their den—
They're scared!
I go and pull it back
I sail it again.
They come out.
I sail it again and they run in—
They're scared!"

The voice of the real self when it talks confidently like that, that is creative literature. Those adults who have kept the real self clear-eyed and unafraid have always something of the sincere child in them. Children desire above everything to get an honest view of the world. The great literary people have this desire too. That is what makes children and poets kin. We might all continue to be the poets

we were as children but somewhere along the line we cease talking confidently to ourselves. We begin to copy the superior persons about us. We put away childish things. We think them of no value. Here and there in the lives of some of us is a teacher, a mother, a good friend, who encourages us to believe in our secret self. So the secret self is kept alive. All literary men and women, all artists too, tell this story.

A young man sees what might happen if he lets his unique self die within him. To a fellow poet he writes, but he is thinking of himself,

"Your eyes will see strange dreams—
Beauty like a palace
Spun of rainbow glass
But someday—
Someday—
You will grow old of a sudden
And tread the paths your fathers trod.
You will forget your dreams
Like one awakened."

I take that poem from the *Rollins Book of Verse*, recent work of undergraduates in Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida. We have elementary schools and high schools now which strive to keep alive the secret self in the young people who come to them. There is an equal need to foster the unique creative spirit among youth in the difficult college years. Rollins College at Winter Park is unashamed to announce just that as one of its chief hopes. For when the creative spirit dies,

"You will grow old of a sudden
You will forget your dreams
Like one awakened."

Those who have let the spirit die through fear or through lack of self-faith, perhaps because no friendly tolerant soul came by to lend a heartening hand, they tell me so often, "I have nothing to say. Even if I should encourage my secret spirit to talk, I would still have nothing to say."

Let me give the answer from another youth represented in the *Rollins book*,

"Fools look straight up
They see nothing
And call it Heaven,
While at their feet
Is potential stuff
To make a paradise."

It is really never too late to awaken the child-spirit in us. All that we need, as in every great endeavor, is faith. Faith in ourselves, faith in the unconquerable power of the human spirit, faith that "at our feet is potential stuff to make a paradise."

Read This!

School reading becomes a glorious adventure under the light touch of a teacher who is also guide, philosopher and friend.

B. J. R. STOLPER

USUALLY American school children don't like to be spoon-fed. They don't like to be commanded. When ordered to act, they act up instead. The trait seems peculiarly noticeable with reference to spinach and recommended reading. Let the wary youngster once get wind of a book which is "good" for him, and he shies off.

Of course children can be *made* to do almost anything. They can be made to read the elevating classic as defined by their elders. Yes, and pass examinations on it. But one learns soon enough, after disconcerting and salutary experience, that the *method* of making children read desirable books is almost more important, in the long run, than the books to be read. Coercion, formalism, efficient "business" methods—or gush, wheedling and coaxing equally defeat the very purpose of reading. Of what use to have marks given, tests passed, grades entered on term-sheets? Of what use to have books read and glibly reported on, if they are soon forgotten or—still more regrettable—remembered and hated?

But what is the ultimate purpose of reading? To me it has never been more clearly set forth than in John Livingston Lowes's article on *Chaucer*, last July, in the *Saturday Review of Literature*:

"I don't know which is the more characteristic the fact that he was reading with the definite purpose of learning or the fact that he was reading fast and eagerly Because he brought both to his books, his reading became a live and plastic thing for his art to seize on."

Children's reading, anyone's reading, is meant to become a "live and plastic" property for use, conscious and unconscious, even unto the remotest thoughts and words. It is children especially who re-embody and re-make what they have read into their own spontaneous imaginings and expressions. But in order to re-make, they must assimilate; and in order to assimilate, they must, above all else, *want* to read. Oh, the spring- tonic called *reading* is quite different from treacle-and-brimstone; the victim himself must be eager for the dose.

So then, here lies the matter in a nutshell. The sole task of the reading-guide—teacher, parent,

pipe-smoking uncle—would seem to be to make the youngster want to read.

Does that sound weak-kneed?

Perhaps it is counter to the sterner profit of doing what one must. But why do youngsters read at all? Suppose that they have no guide, no assignments, no body of reading culture to catch up on. Suppose they are left to themselves. They will still read, bless 'em, for precisely Chaucer's own reasons—either a story for the story, or else text and reference books for information immediately needed. They read books they *want*.

The difficulty of youth is an unconscious, charming and pathetic one. There are so many enthralling stories that they may not meet for years, or may meet at the wrong time, or perhaps not meet at all. And there are so many useful and concentrated sources of information which they need at once and want at once, and yet cannot find because the sources are hidden away under titles not to be found conveniently in encyclopedias or indexes.

Here is where teachers and parents and all such grown-ups come in—as guides. The guides' business is to lead willing children to stories still more absorbing, to information still more usable, than can be hit on by chance by the children themselves. Grown-ups, fortuitously so much older, have such immense stores of valuable knowledge, amusing and useful, that would be immediately available, if one only asked.

If one only asked! This is what I should like to plant as a violently blazing crimson danger signal to all recommenders, guides and assigners of reading to children—it is polite to be asked! *Always keep in mind that one must wait to be asked.* I don't know whether I have any secret for getting children to read. But if ever I had one, that was it!

I have never said, "Here is a list of books you ought to read," or even, "Here is a list of interesting books," until quite a while after the boys and girls have been asking me, on their own, for something "good", "thrilling" or useful.

I am definitely in the ranks of those who believe in the necessity for assigned reading. I am con-

vinced of the uselessness of desultory reading for any but rare birds like your Johnsons and Macaulays; so much so, that I should dismiss it as a general help for making cultured readers out of truculent little boys and girls.

But granted the need for assigned reading, there seem to be two camps in the field. Each of them may be facetiously epitomized, it seems to me, in an old-fashioned copy book maxim. The first includes those who assume that cultured reading can be spanked into, threatened into, flunked into children; in short that "little birds who *can* sing and *won't* sing must be *made* to sing." The second harbors those who are sentimentally certain that pressure of any kind, almost is immoral—almost—no matter how subtly applied, and that anyway "you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink." Since I set forth these two as the only existing camps, it seems paradoxical to say that both are wrong. The "bird" campers are so intent on making the little wretches sing, they forget that the resulting song seems more for their own benefit than for the birds! The "horse" campers forget the absurdity of trying to make a horse drink what he doesn't want, even though one has led him to it. A judicious combination of both undesirable methods becomes useful, somehow, as if they had lost their toxins in the combining. You can make the little birds sing, you can make the horse drink, if you make the bird happy and the horse thirsty.

Techniques That Work

Do THESE personified-animal figures lead anywhere? Yes, for teachers, to two practicable, feet-on-the-ground methods for making youngsters read "desirable" books and—read 'em like everything!

Method One—Enjoy aloud, in the presence of the group, one or more desirable books. (But you must be a liked and trusted person, remember!) You have read them yourself, you have liked them heartily, you are sharing them spontaneously and at full heat of enthusiasm with young people you like. This will lead—it never fails—to animated class-enjoyment, by this one and that one, of books each of them has read. And after that comes an inevitable and consequent swapping of titles, exchange of ideas, recommendations and warnings, all under the benevolent but hidden guidance of the trusted teacher. In the background of the guide's plan, of course, lie extraordinarily well-compiled, printed book lists, issued by schools, libraries and commissions, like those of the National Council, the

Hartford Reading List, and the Newark World of Books. Children who distrust printed recommendations of strangers presently accept without question what is vouched for after approval by one they themselves trust and admire. But they, the children, must first have been led to *ask*.

Public Opinion and Private Taste

METHOD TWO—This is drastic and is likely to lead to trouble where outspokenness is frowned on. But it works almost magically, it cuts red tape, it saves teachers' time and energy, and it has been known to draw a whole school, severally, and not en masse, regardless of grade and age, to one room—into literary discussions, not to say free-fights. This is the "bulletin board method." After several informal chats and "enjoyments" of books that one has read, the Liked and Trusted One suggests that recommendations of fine books, and warnings against stupid ones, be posted on the bulletin board with initials signed. It is further suggested that enthusiastic agreement or violent disagreement by others (children deal currently in sharp blacks and whites) be penciled and initialed immediately under the original item on the bulletin board. Why initialed? Because it is only fair to accept responsibility for one's public opinions. Youngsters' language, when they are among themselves, is likely to be anything but academic. The results are dynamite! But they can be controlled. I have controlled them, and they stimulate such an awakening of reading consciousness that even the voluntary scanning of book lists, book reviews and literary news becomes an accepted procedure and actually a habit as in the book-loving guide himself.

To sum up the obvious, to make children read one must first make them admire and trust. The guide must be accepted simply as an older and wiser friend. The recent Frick reading-investigation showed children as taking the recommendations of classmates and friends far beyond those of teachers and parents. One must be casual and informal in preparation and discussion for getting children to read. Over-formality, reading by "salvos," so to speak, is deadly in its effect; the class atmosphere must be human. Finally, if youngsters like *you*, they will like what you like. They will like the books that you like, or that you let them hear you "liking" out loud, in their presence—and the trick is nearly done.

How often that word *like* recurs here! It is well that it should be so.

Study Group Department

CÉCILE PILPEL, Director

JOSETTE FRANK, Editor

This study material is presented for the use of interested individuals or groups having the topic of this issue on their regular programs. The study outline is based on the articles. Questions and discussion are taken from study group records.

PARENTS' QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Should fairy or folk tales be altered or expurgated in reading them to children to eliminate their cruelty or pathos?

IN reading stories of this kind we have to consider the age and emotional make-up of the particular child. The traditional fairy tale is not well suited, as a rule, to the very young child and might better not be read to him at all. We can modify the stories somewhat in telling them, to suit the child's age and needs. Also we can select our story with some thought as to its proximity to bedtime, or a condition of temporary illness involving temperature or over-sensitiveness. But we have to remember, also, that many of the "tragedies" which are so real to us have little significance for the child who has no background of experience to give them life and meaning. Except for the unusually sensitive child we can safely read to children many things which we ourselves find harrowing; and if we are careful not to emphasize the elements of horror by our voice and manner they will be unaffected by anything beyond the story's primary theme and interest.

A six-year-old is distressed to the point of tears and "bad dreams" by any sad or tragic happening in stories read to her. Should her reading be selected to eliminate such material or would it be better not to shield her from stories of this nature?

IF a young child is so sensitive it would be wise to protect her from such vicarious suffering. Nothing is to be gained by practicing this kind of emotion. At the same time it would be well to examine into the possible causes of her distress. Sometimes there is some anxiety at the bottom of such reactions, an uneasiness or insecurity, or perhaps a sense of guilt which causes the child to fear for herself the very happening which

has overtaken someone in the story. If we can discover the root of her difficulty we can relieve her distress by helping her to a more secure basis for her emotional life.

Should we read "Mother Goose" to young Children?

MUCH controversy on this question has raged among educators. Some feel that the language of Mother Goose is so remote and unintelligible that the child just becoming acquainted with language will be confused. Others believe that the young child is concerned chiefly with sound and rhythm and that in these respects the Mother Goose verses surpass all of the modern rhymes that are offered in their place.

Certainly Mother Goose has stood the test of many years of nursery reading; and certainly its music and rhythm, its vividness and humor still delight even the most sophisticated toddler. To him it is all so simple; all things are made perfectly possible and quite as they should be. We cannot—and probably should not—bar Mother Goose from the nursery. But we would do well to guard against over-emphasizing nursery rhymes as entertainment, lest we substitute passive listening or rote memorizing for the more active interests of the nursery age.

A boy of seven does not enjoy reading or being read to. How can we stimulate him to a love of reading?

MANY educators today are questioning the desirability of reading in the years before seven. They see the young child as an active organism whose chief business is to grow in muscular control and stature, and whose principal intellectual concern is the discovery and investigation of what is around him. Thus they prefer to

defer his reading until he has had ample opportunity to experience his own real world. The child of that age often prefers to have stories told to him rather than read, since story-telling makes for a more lively and active interest. Later, when he feels the need for wider horizons, he may himself seek the vicarious experience to be found in reading, if books are kept available for him. In any case, we have to realize that children differ widely in their approach to reading, and that it is not wise to try to force them into our own pattern of "reading for its own sake."

A mother is concerned because her twelve-year-old daughter "is so absorbed in books that she makes no friends." She wonders whether a social impulse might be stimulated by the reading of certain books which glorify friendship.

IT is unlikely that this girl's lack of friendships is *because* of her absorption in books. Rather, it is likely that she is using her reading as a refuge into which to escape from social contacts which are somehow difficult for her. We will have to understand the source of her difficulties in order to help her make a better adjustment. It may be that for some reason she feels inferior or unable to compete with others of her group. It may be that she is shy or not very expressive and does not know how to make friendly advances to other children. Or it may be that she has not a sufficiently wide range of choice to find, in the available group, a companion whose interests are akin to her own. It is not so much in the selection of her reading that this girl needs help, but rather in finding ways of putting herself across in social contacts that will be satisfying to her.

At what age should a child begin to read the daily newspapers? And how can we guard against the evils of sensational journalism?

WE cannot fix an arbitrary age, since children differ widely in their curiosity about what is going on around them. We can only be guided by the child's own indication of interest. But it is impossible, in any case, to "protect" our growing children from contact with daily papers, for these are everywhere. Nor do the attenuated current events sheets, published for school use, take their place, for these usually lack the dramatic quality and "human interest" appeal of the daily. When the child becomes interested in current news

we can see to it that a good daily and perhaps a good news weekly come regularly to our home; and we can discuss with the child those items of the news which seem significant. We have to remember that the current murder or robbery is quite as absorbing as any thriller of fiction; and though we are shocked by the immediacy of these crimes of violence, we can, in discussing them, give them their due importance as sporadic rather than usual incidents in the community's living. Nor must we forget that contemporary life as reflected in the daily news—in its sordid as well as its romantic or genuinely stimulating aspects—is a legitimate part of the child's growing knowledge of the world he lives in.

What about the comics?

PARENTS usually deplore the comics on the basis of their poor taste and low grade humor. On the other hand, we are bound to admit in their favor a certain universality, in the human situations they depict and in their lively and humorous happenings, which no matter how crude, appeal to children of all ages, of whatever background. The pictures themselves are so colorful and full of action, and the humor is so obvious, that the entertainment to be derived from them is easy and rapid. Sometimes, indeed, they offer the child a welcome relief from a rarified home atmosphere which over-emphasizes "culture."

We need not fear the effect of the comics upon children's standards of taste. As adults we can take light entertainment along with our more substantial enjoyments and still retain our power of discrimination. The same is true of children.

At fourteen, a high school girl reads most of the novels which the adults of her household are reading, scorning so-called "juveniles." Should her parents therefore maintain a careful censorship over their own reading, barring out of their libraries books they consider unsuitable for their daughter?

IT is likely that the child's tastes in reading will be, to an extent, shaped by the reading of the people in her environment. If, therefore, the books which the adults read are at least in good taste the child's reading is likely to be so also. As to the suitability of their content, this will be determined by the girl's own understanding and experience. What she gets from any picture of contemporary life that she finds in a book will de-

pend upon what she brings to her reading. This is not to say that the child of fine taste and discrimination will not read and enjoy books which are inferior or even vulgar or sordid. Her own experiences in living are so limited and circumscribed by the standards of her group that she may need to

experience other modes of life—even evil living—vicariously, through her reading. But she will bring to this reading attitudes derived from her home environment and other social experiences and these will determine her acceptance or rejection of the standard or codes of conduct she finds in books.

STUDY MATERIAL: THE CHILD'S READING

Topical Outline

1. VALUE OF READING

- a. As source of information
- b. As inspiration and stimulus
- c. As moral guidance
- d. As vicarious experience
- e. As pastime and recreation
- f. As widening of horizons:
interpretation of life
communication with other times and places

2. THE BOOK AND THE CHILD

- a. A book must meet present needs considering
age and intellectual level
individual variation
shifting interests
time and place
- b. A book must have merit in its own right
information must be reliable and suitable
sentiment must be sound and sincere
life values and standards must be true
style and diction must be good

3. THE CHILD'S READING

- a. Fairy tales, fables, the classics
- b. Modern fiction, adventure and mystery
- c. Science and discovery
- d. The arts
- e. "Literature" vs. "trash"
- f. Current events

4. ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

- a. Cultivating taste
- b. Reading vs. "doing" for the young child
- c. Dangers of withdrawal from reality
- d. Selection as a continuous process
- e. Use of libraries, book ownership

5. THE ADOLESCENT'S READING

- a. "Required" vs. "free" reading
- b. The question of censorship

6. SETS OF BOOKS

- a. "One-volume libraries" vs. single books
- b. Compendia of information and encyclopedias
- c. Series

Problems for Discussion

1. List the characteristics which would indicate to you that a book is unsuitable for a given child. What criteria would a book need to fulfill to make it suitable?
2. If you had a given sum (say \$50.00) to spend for books for a child, how would you spend it? That is, what would be your basis of selection?
3. How far is a child's character affected by his reading? Will books of fine idealism and courage, or conversely, books of low moral tone, fix his standards or inspire him to emulation?

4. Many high school children complain that the classics which are used as required reading in their English courses are forever spoiled for them as reading for pleasure. In what ways could you as a parent or teacher meet this problem?
5. What are some reasons for the decline in popularity with adolescents of the classics of the Victorian era?
6. What are the possible effects of contemporary literature on the adolescent?

Reference Reading

- Cross-roads to Childhood
By Anne Carroll Moore. George H. Doran Co. 1926
- Children's Reading
By L. M. Terman and M. Lima. D. Appleton & Co. rev. 1931
- Your Child Today and Tomorrow
By Sidonie M. Gruenberg. Lippincott & Co. Chapter VII rev. 1928
- Creative Youth
By Hughes Mearns. Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1926
- Creative Power
By Hughes Mearns. Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1929

- Children's Library Yearbook: Number Three
Compiled by the Committee on Library Work
With Children of the American Library Association, Chicago 1931
- The Decline of Mother Goose
By Alfred Kreymborg. Published in the New Generation.
Edited by Calverton & Schmalhausen. The Macaulay Co. 1930
- Realms of Gold
Compiled by Bertha E. Mahony and Elinor Whitney.
Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1929
- Contemporary Illustrators of Children's Books
Compiled by Bertha E. Mahony and Elinor Whitney.
The Bookshop for Boys and Girls, Boston. 1930

Book Reviews

Parents' Guides to Children's Books

JOSETTE FRANK

ONE of our well-known cartoonists recently pictured a puzzled mother standing disconsolate before a bookshelf filled with shining books, labelled *Classics—Shakespeare, Life of Lincoln, etc.* Alas, these dignified tomes stood in rows upon their shelves untouched—"as good as new"—while lying open on chairs and tables with every appearance of awaiting their reader's eager return, were lurid paper editions of thrillers—*Gang War, Life of Capone* and *Flivver Love*. The cartoon bore the caption: "Why Mothers Get Gray!"

Certainly the cartoonist has given us more than the proverbial "grain of truth." Mothers do take their children's reading seriously. This fact is attested by the many studies and lists and guides which are addressed to parents aiming to assist them in selecting their children's reading. As far back as 1834 an article in *The Mother's Magazine* called attention to the fact that mothers must educate their children in the home through guided reading:

"We have books appropriate to different ages, from the English Penny Magazine, Peter Parley's Magazine, Geography, etc., etc., with others of a more religious tendency, up to the best classical writers of different countries, at prices greatly reduced within a few years. What a fund of knowledge, literature and science, may be obtained for thirty dollars, in the seventy odd volumes of Harper's Family Library, how many moral benefits from Jane Taylor's works, Mrs. Sherwood's least romantic writings, and many others that might be mentioned!"

This emphasis upon the "moral benefits" to be derived by children from their reading is to be found in all of the literature of the time. No doubt this attitude toward children's reading might be traced to the redoubtable authority of John Locke himself. In surveying *A Century of Children's Books*, Florence V. Barry quotes the dictum of Locke that when a child begins to read:

"Some easy pleasant Book, suited to his Capacity should be put into his Hands, wherein the Entertainment that he finds might draw him on, and

reward his Pains in Reading, and yet not such as should fill his Head with perfectly useless Trumpery, or lay the Principles of Vice and Folly. To this purpose I think Aesop's Fables the best, which being Stories apt to delight and entertain a Child, may yet afford useful Reflections to a grown Man' . . . Locke knew no other books in English 'fit to engage the liking of children and tempt them to read,' and indeed there were few to know."

The past century, however, brought an enormous change in the type of literature published expressly for children, a fact which surely indicates a greatly changed parental attitude toward children's reading. Terman and Lima, in their book on *Children's Reading* have traced this change in America:

" . . . where the earlier literature was so much influenced by the Puritan viewpoint. The famous *New England Primer*, first used about 1700, . . . contained the alphabet, the catechism, and religious instruction all in one. Stern and forbidding as the Primer may now seem, it was light and frivolous compared with some of the literature that the Puritans considered especially suitable reading for children . . . The Bible, the catechism, and a volume of *Fox's Martyrs* was the extent of the usual family library. . . . The few books that were printed for children were all tinged with this sombre philosophy of life. Children, in stories, were generally precocious infants who died young. . . . Children's poetry, for example, was of this nature:

'I in the burial place may see
Graves shorter far than I;
From death's arrest no age is free
Young children, too, may die.'

"It was not until some of the older chap-books published by John Newbery, were imported from England in 1750, that the children of America, and especially of New England, had any considerable choice of lighter reading."

There is still a widespread insistence, upon the "moral values" of the child's books and their importance for "character building," as, for example,

in Walter Taylor Field's *Guide to Literature for Children*:

"How much of this juvenile crime is due to vicious reading? Those who are familiar with the work of parental and reform schools and with the police courts will tell you that no other agency, unless it is the 'movies' or association with criminal classes, is so largely responsible."

More faith in the native resiliency of youth is expressed by Edwin D. Starbuck in his *Guide to Books for Character*:

"Every year brings refreshing signs in school and home that in the education of children hard necessity is giving place to creativeness and cultural appreciation, and that Duty is being transformed into Beauty. Such a consummation will strengthen and not, as the rigorists claim, soften moral fiber. Moral tastes are their own security. The native revulsions of normal children influenced by the tastes of cultivated adults will insure wholesome rigor against the ugly and a vigorous acceptance of the comely in conduct and sentiment."

Parental Censorship

How far shall parents and teachers attempt to control children's choice of books? There are many who would leave the child free to discover for himself the good and bad in his reading. Chief among these advocates of freedom, perhaps, are those who bring from their own childhood passionate memories of happy browsing in a wide world of books. Writing in a symposium on *The New Generation of the Decline of Mother Goose*, Alfred Kreymsberg says:

"I have a notion drawn from my own memories, that there is altogether too much supervision in the field of juvenile literature. A modicum of early guidance is essential, apparently enough. But the guidance should take the form of attractive suggestion rather than strict tutelage. Children gather their own impressions of what they read and exchange them with one another. Much as we'd like to add it to ours or develop it according to ours, the child world is a world apart. . . . From my own limited experience, I should say that youngsters have an early tendency to read things well over their heads and to let those passages slide which they cannot understand."

Terman and Lima, however, here take issue:

"In recent years, certain educators have advocated the 'free and natural' upbringing of the child In regard to reading, they say, 'Allow the child to browse where he will; in time

he will learn to prefer the good to the bad, and where a book is merely weak or worthless, it cannot hurt him.' This is a dangerous doctrine If the child is left to browse in a library that contains many worthless and harmful books, his reading taste is likely to become perverted and he may receive harmful impressions that will warp his whole life. The child should be allowed to choose his own books, but only the best should be presented for his choice."

As to what may constitute that "best" there is, however, a range of opinion so wide and varied that the parent who seeks "authoritative" advice on the subject will, in the last analysis, be compelled to make his own choices among these authorities. On the one hand are many who agree with Locke's dictum against the "fearful apprehensions" to be found in tales of spirits and goblins. On the other hand, we find many defenders of these time-honored tales for children. Stephen Leacock, writing in *The Forum* of March, 1928, assures us that:

". . . all the terror that grown-up people see in this sort of story is there for grown-up people only. The children look clean over it, or past it, or under it. In reality the vision of the grandmother feebly defending herself against the savage beast, or perhaps leaping round the room to get away from him and jumping up on top of the grandfather's clock, is either horrible, or weird, or pathetic, or even comic, as we may happen to see it. But to the children it is just a story—and a good one—that's all Don't worry about the apparent terror and bloodshed in the children's books, the real children's books. There is none there. It only represents the way in which little children, from generation to generation, learn in ways as painless as can be followed, the stern environment of life and death."

As to the so-called classics and the extent of their appeal to children in this machine age of ours, the current *Children's Library Yearbook* includes within its covers two widely divergent views. Flora de Gogorza writes:

"The characteristics of our Machine age have definitely changed our children's books and their demands in reading The radical changes affecting our daily life have been so recent and so rapid that authorities may well disagree as to their benefits to mankind. . . . With these outward changes the inner thoughts and interests of our boys and girls have also changed."

In the same year book, Charles J. Finger tells us that the old favorites of children are still and for-

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What Books for Children?

The Children's Book Committee of the Child Study Association is made up of parents who have, over a period of years, made a thoughtful study of children's leisure reading.

MRS. HUGH GRANT STRAUS

WHY children's booklists? Why need we concern ourselves with the criticism and the selection of children's books?

The Children's Book Committee of the Child Study Association of America sometimes pauses in its yearly routine of work, or in its mad rush of reviewing the just-before-Christmas avalanche of "juveniles" to ask itself these questions. In answering them for itself the Committee has clarified its own purposes and focused its efforts to meet specific needs.

There are two distinct schools of opinion in this matter of guiding the child's reading. On the one side are those who fear to rob the child of his sacred freedom of choice. On the other side are those who maintain that "guidance" need not preclude "freedom." Do we, they ask, permit the child a "free choice" in his diet? Do we not contrive to supplement his chosen pickles-and-ice cream lunch with a wholesome balance? Does he not need our wise selection in his reading, just as he needs our guidance for his physical well being?

Recent years have seen significant changes, not only in the nature of children's books, but also in the numbers available. Last year some eight hundred children's books were published in the United States alone. In this deluge of books it is to be expected that there will be a wide range of worth—from the real and valuable to the utterly insignificant. Obviously, the child cannot choose—he is overwhelmed by numbers. Thus whether we wish it or not, we are compelled to separate the wheat from the chaff, to choose which books out of the many we shall place before our children. For if we do not choose, we may cheat them of the finest and best. Their quest for knowledge, for recreation, for beauty in books is all too easily betrayed by the cheap, the tawdry and the sentimental.

How then shall parents themselves approach the task of selecting from among this enormous number of books? And by what criteria shall they eval-

uate them? The task presents a challenge. Because of this challenge, and because, as parents, we have recognized the importance of reading in our children's lives, we are concerned to place before them the best and most suitable. It is in the hope of guiding other parents too in the wise selection of books for their children that the Children's Book Committee functions.

Each year the Committee reviews the juveniles which come from the publishers, in an endeavor to select "the best." Again and again we are asked to define this "best"—to state the standards by which we measure value in books for children. Our demands are few but fundamental.

If we want a book for information, then this must be clearly and accurately given, in language and form suited to the child for whom it is intended. The world is full of wonderful things which even the youngest child can comprehend.

If we want a book for fun, the humor must be whimsical and kindly, unspoiled by satire or sophistication.

If we want a book to stimulate the imagination, it must open up new visions of a world of loveliness and true feeling. Eager hands are bringing the treasures of legend and romance from every corner of the earth to be spread upon the printed page for the younger as well as for the older child.

Of each book we ask ourselves whether it will widen our understanding of life and of people through vicarious experience and adventure. Has it literary quality? Has it spiritual integrity and sincerity? Of every book—for whatever purpose—we want to know: Are the print and its spacing such as are suitable for the age of the reader?

And what about the illustrations? Here the book of today is showing great possibilities in artistic achievement. There is a new awareness of beauty; the "everyday" value of art is receiving recognition throughout modern life. With new processes of color reproduction and printing, there seems now

no limit to the transmitting of the creative vision of the artist to the world of childhood. But even in this there is a danger. Publishers are availing themselves of this interest in attractive format and illustrations to sell otherwise inferior material.

This yearly parade of children's books, then, passes continuously before our Children's Book Committee. In arriving at its conclusions and recommendations the Committee has developed certain methods of procedure. Each review is based upon a questionnaire, thus assuring a similarity of approach in the inquiry to which all books are subjected. Each book is reviewed by at least two members. Where differences of opinion develop—and these are frequent—the book is referred for a third or a fourth reading.

The Committee meets weekly to discuss these reviews and the individual opinions are threshed out in discussion that is sometimes heated, but always illuminating. For example, here is a "thriller" which will certainly hold its youthful reader spell-bound, but its lurid situations are short in ethics, and its language is far from choice. Shall we therefore recommend it as among "the best"? Another book presents a really striking and realistic picture of life—of the problems of one social-economic stratum. But in its effort to be "broadminded" it is too conscious of its own noble generosity. Shall we risk this thinly-veiled class prejudice in order to broaden our children's knowledge? Still another book gives a stirring account of real adventure on the high seas—but with a strong flavor of nationalism—one nation alone is noble, courageous, unselfish. Shall we expose our children to such a concept for the sake of a good story? This is but a sampling of the many moot points that challenge the Committee's judgment.

The discussions serve also to clarify our own thinking. Through them we are continuously checking our criteria. For, after all, we are neither trained librarians, educators, nor professional critics, but lay parents, constantly endeavoring through study to build up our own standards and values. Through our work many of us have made distinct gains, not only in our knowledge of books, but in our understanding of many of the wider psychological implications of our children's reading.

We feel, too, that as parents we have something to contribute in this specialized field. To an extent, our lists are different from others which are built up by school or library. Ours is distinctly a list for home use—a parent's list. The teacher's school list has in mind the educational purposes to be served; the librarian's list must be influenced by tradition and the very wide public to which it

must appeal. We, as parents familiar with the needs of our children from the viewpoint of modern psychology, are free to select books according to the degree to which they satisfy the many-sided interests of child life.

Sometimes we differ radically from other reviewers and other lists in our judgments. But we have not been afraid to brave criticism by resisting the tide of popular approval of a book or an author and in many cases the years have justified our decisions. Through our work we are gaining faith in ourselves and faith in our own standards.

In addition to its yearly list of current books, published just before Christmas, the Committee holds an exhibit at the Association's headquarters. This exhibit, augmented each December by the new selections, is maintained the year round for reference. Besides the current books there are also special lists which the Committee publishes from time to time and keeps current in its exhibits. These include groups of "Books for Nature Study," "Books About New York City," "Books on Travel for Young People," and "Bible Stories and Bible Times for Children." In response to many requests the Committee is now working on the revision of our general reading list for boys and girls from nine to fourteen; and a list for the younger child will be our "job" for the coming spring. Reviews of current books, or of special aspects of children's reading are prepared by the Committee for publication monthly in *CHILD STUDY*. Our files and records of selections and criticisms are carefully organized and kept current and available for reference.

We should like to acknowledge here the fine co-operation of the publishers who have greatly facilitated our work by sending us their books regularly for review. As ours is a non-commercial point-of-view, they have on occasion sought our criticism and suggestion, and we have evidence again and again of publishers' interest both in our lists and in our various exhibits.

There is ample evidence, too, that our lists are welcomed by parents, from whom there is a continuous demand for our services. Not only are the general and special lists sold in goodly quantities, but letters from parents, teachers, librarians and psychiatrists ask our advice with regard to children's reading. In response to such requests the Committee frequently sends lists especially prepared to meet specific needs. Thus, through these many-sided contacts, the Committee feels that it functions as a clearing house serving the parent and the publisher, no less than the child himself.

Among the New Books for Children

As Christmas approaches, we reach the high watermark of the year's production of children's books. This season's stream has so far carried with it a flood of varied quality and interest. Among recent offerings the following titles have been selected for comment.

For the Nursery Age

The Second Picture Book. By Mary Steichen Martin. Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$2.00.

Peggy and Peter. By Lena Towsley. Farrar & Rinehart, Inc. \$2.50.

The Shadow's Holiday. By Larry June and Joseph Alger. Farrar & Rinehart, Inc. \$1.50.

Last year, Mary Steichen Martin and her artist-father, Edward Steichen, created a new departure in book-making for children. In "The First Picture Book," graphic photographs of simple objects from the nursery world called forth happy recognition from the wee toddler.

This year the educational principle that was the basis of the first volume has been carried forward for the slightly older child, in this "Second Book." Here, in superb photographs, we see the energetic small person using familiar things. These pictures invite the child to tell his own little story thereby stimulating him both to use his imagination and to exercise his new gift of language. Moreover, the pictures suggest to the young mother the possibilities of joy for the young child in hammering, in climbing, in meditative freedom in the daisy field, or before the mystery of the piano keyboard. A little questionnaire is appended to guide the author in future experiment and incidentally is suggestive of how the volume may best be used in the nursery.

Two other photographic books, brought forward for children this year call forth comment here. In "Peggy and Peter" a series of photographs of two charming children is accompanied by a brief text to guide us through their day, from their "risings up to their lying down." Here the material is forced into the mold of consecutive events. The delightful photographs are somewhat repetitious, counting upon the text to give life and continuity to the story.

In "Shadow's Holiday" we share the adventures of shadows gathered in the tool shed, while the sun is hidden. Here we have an excuse for some splendid stunt-photography supported by a little story of familiar things in a quaint concept that will amuse the three-year-old.

F. S. S.

The Story of a Little White Teddy Bear. By Dorothy Sherrill. Farrar & Rinehart, Inc. \$1.00.

This is a very little book for a very little child—a perfect three-year-old story of a most human baby teddy bear who goes adventuring and regrets it. The tale is told in gay pictures and a pleasant pattern throughout gives it the rhythm that is so satisfying to small hearts.

J. F.

Snippy and Snappy. By Wanda Ga'g. Coward-McCann, Inc. \$1.50.

What should be more joyously logical than that Wanda Ga'g, creator of "Millions of Cats" should write the most perfect mouse story? And here are Snippy and Snappy, the most adorable of field mice—adventuring "up and down and down and up"—to the queer strange house with its smell of

cheese. And, of course, there is a trap, and of course it is father-mouse who rescues them so that they live happily ever after. The story, for all its simplicity, is truly dramatic and the accompanying pictures are delightfully naive in the modern manner.

F. S. S.

A Head for Happy. By Helen Sewell. The Macmillan Co. \$2.50.

A captivating picture-story of gay adventures has been created by this gifted artist. In pictures of rare charm, three little girls set forth on a fantastic search around the world for a head to fit their toy-playmate. Miss Sewell's fine drawings and gay nonsense will appeal to young and old.

F. S. S.

Benny and his Penny. By Lois Lenski. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.00.

Many young children will welcome Lois Lenski's new picture-book about Benny and his bright new penny (given him on his fourth birthday). Benny's journey through a land at once fantastic and real, in an effort to spend his bright new penny, is related in simple text, and the sing-song last line "And Benny kept his penny" will delight young ears. The minuteness of detail, the lovely color and the humor of the illustrations are a feast for the eyes.

A. R. B.

A Gay Assortment for the Young Reader

The House That Grew Smaller. (40 pages). By Margery Williams Bianco. Illus. by Rachel Field. The Macmillan Co. \$1.50.

Here a beloved author and a gifted illustrator have combined to give us a story of rare charm and originality. A deserted house venturing forth down a friendly New England hillside grows smaller and smaller until finally it is perched as a proud and happy bird-house by the side of a bustling road.

F. S. S.

Ella the Elephant. (27 pages). By Kurt Wiese. Coward-McCann, Inc. \$1.50.

Again the artist-author tells a story of animal babyhood—this time a baby elephant, lost in the jungle, escaping from its enemies, and protected by friendly beasts. The mystery and drama of the jungle are pictured in simple text and characteristic illustrations. Ella is a most fitting little sister for "Karoo" and Wallie the Walrus.

J. F.

Little Pear. (144 pages). By Eleanor Frances Latimore. Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$2.00.

This is not just another story of a little Chinese boy. It is the story of a five-year-old through whose adventurous wanderings we get a lovely picture of the way Chinese children live, play, eat, behave and misbehave. The text and illustrations are a chemical union, not a mechanical one; for the pictures

(Continued on page 89.)

A more complete list of the Committee's selection of the year's best books will be published in pamphlet form, ready for distribution, December 1. Price 10 cents.

News and Notes

It is with profound sorrow that the Board of Directors of the Child Study Association of America records the death of one of its most valued members, Mrs. John Wood Blodgett. In her death, the Association has lost one of its staunchest and most understanding friends. Her recognition of the significance of the Association's work for parent education, her readiness to aid at all times with enthusiastic interest, generous support and wise counsel have been unfailing sources of help and inspiration.

In addition to her work on the Executive Committee of the Child Study Association, Mrs. Blodgett was a member of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, and a director of the National Organization for Public Health Nursing. The Institute of Euthenics at Vassar was made possible through a fund given by her to the college of which she was a graduate. She was also a leader in child welfare and public health work in her home city of Grand Rapids.

Although she was aware of the fact that death might overtake her at any moment, Mrs. Blodgett continued to carry on her many activities with undiminished interest. She had come to New York, where she was stricken, to attend meetings of the various organizations in which she was interested.

Radio Lectures on Psychology

Under the auspices of the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education of the National Broadcasting Company, an unusual course of short addresses will be given weekly covering a wide range of modern psychology, child development, changes in personality, and similar questions. This series which begins on October 17 will be introduced

by Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University. Among the other speakers are Arnold Gesell, Harold F. Jones, Gardner Murphy, Robert S. Woodworth and Leta S. Hollingworth.

Books for Children on Exhibit

The Child Study Association's Annual Exhibit of Children's Books will be opened at its Headquarters with a meeting at which Miss Anne Eaton will be the speaker, on December 1. Miss Eaton, who is librarian of the Lincoln School of Teachers College, and editor of the Children's Book Page of the New York Times will talk on *Children's Reading Today*, and members of the Children's Book Committee of the Association, which prepares the Exhibit, will be the hostesses. The Exhibit will continue until Christmas. As a service to members and visitors for its duration, books may be ordered for immediate delivery.

Books Across the Sea

The Liaison Committee of the International Federation of Home and School makes a suggestion in its recent report to meet the difficulty in choosing interesting and worth while literature for children, especially for the better understanding of other nations. They are making a great effort to found a prize similar to the Nobel Prize to be awarded each year for the best book or publication for children, that will not only be interesting but will develop a spirit of international cooperation. The Committee also plans to disseminate periodicals which will arouse in the minds of the young a sympathetic curiosity toward foreign peoples and emphasize the inter-dependence of the nations in the development of civilization. It considers that those publications which are generously illustrated should be especially recommended, since pictures constitute an international language universally understood by young people.

A New Radio Hour

The Child Study Association will broadcast over WEAJ and associated radio stations on Wednesday at 2:00 beginning November 4, through the courtesy of the National Broadcasting Company. Questions sent in by parents on problems of child training will be the basis of each weekly

discussion. Parents may write to WEAFA, 711 Fifth Avenue, New York City, or to the Association's Headquarters, 221 West 57th Street.

Mental Hygiene for the Community Social workers everywhere are recognizing the importance of the mental hygiene point of view in dealing with community problems. To meet this need the Queensborough Council of Social Agencies, cooperating with other organizations, announces a course of fifteen lectures on the "Mental Hygiene of Everyday Life." Among the speakers will be Bernard Glueck, Lawson G. Lowrey, George K. Pratt. The meetings will be held on Wednesday evenings, beginning October 21, at 8 o'clock in the Queens County Medical Society Building, Forest Hills, New York.

Analyzing the Mechanics of Organization The United Parents Association is sponsoring a training course in "Principles of Organization" to be given by LeRoy E. Bowman, Director of Extension Work, Summer Play Schools Committee of the Child Study Association. Mr. Bowman will lead the discussion, and experts in particular phases of problems peculiar to parent-teacher associations will be invited to attend the meetings and participate in the discussions. This course will be given on Monday evenings from October 26 to December 14 at New York University.

Annual Meeting The Annual Meeting of the Child Study Association will be held at its Headquarters, Wednesday afternoon, November 11 at three o'clock. After brief reports of current activities, Dr. C. M. Hincks, General Director of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, will speak on *Mental Hygiene and Parent Education*.

Religion and Parent Education A special series of evening lectures on *Religion and Parent Education* will be held at Association Headquarters on four Wednesdays, at 8:30—November 18, December 2, 9 and 16. The chairman for all the meetings will be Dr. William H. Kilpatrick, Professor of Education at Teachers College. The speakers on the successive evenings will be: Dr. Sidney E. Goldstein, of the Free Synagogue; Dr. Thomas Verner Moore, of the Catholic University, Washington, D. C.; Dr. Felix Adler, of the Society for Ethical Culture; and Dr. George A. Buttrick, of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City.

Concepts of Discipline

On Tuesday afternoon, November 24, at 3:30 P. M., the Child Study Association announces a *Symposium on Concepts of Discipline*, at Headquarters. The Chairman for the meeting will be Mrs. Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg and the speakers will include, Dr. Smiley Blanton, Dr. William E. Blatz and Dr. Rollo G. Reynolds.

Study Group Registration

The Headquarters Study Groups of the Child Study Association began their winter program October 26. The widespread interest in these study groups, offered by the Association to its members, is evidenced by the large number of registrants, and by the range and variety of their interest. Registration is still open.

Association Holds Annual Conference

As this issue goes to press, the Child Study Association's Annual Conference is being held at the Hotel Pennsylvania and Association Headquarters. The subject of the Conference—*Social and Economic Changes in Marriage and Family Life*—is one which brings a special challenge at a time such as this. Among those who will contribute to the discussions are: Bernard Glueck, Robert S. Lynd, Lois Hayden Meek, Donald Young, Eduard C. Lindeman, Rachel Stutsman, Caroline B. Zachry, Harry M. Shulman, and Ruth Brickner. Mrs. Howard S. Gans, President of the Child Study Association, will preside. A detailed report will appear in a later issue of *CHILD STUDY*.

What Shall Parents Read?

The Sixth Edition of *Books—A Selected List for Parents and Teachers*, published by the Child Study Association, comes from the press as study groups are taking up their new programs. Over five hundred books are included in this invaluable guide to a rapidly increasing mass of parent education literature. Though this seems a large number, it represents a careful pruning and cutting from the plethora of volumes that have been considered by the Bibliography Committee of the Association. New sections—*Family Relationships, Vocational Guidance, Religion, Ethics and Philosophy, Sociology* and a group of *Background Books*—indicate the varied and significant lines along which parent education is functioning in our lives today. *Books—A Selected List for Parents and Teachers, Child Study Association, 221 West 57th Street, New York City. 72 pages. \$.35.*

New Books for Children

(Continued from page 86.)

are alive with action, humor and pathos and though they are black and white, they have a feeling of brilliant color.

A. R. B.

Gay Madelon. (143 pages). By Ethel Calvert Phillips. Houghton Mifflin Co. \$2.00.

A vivid tale of a small girl's day-to-day adventures in a French-Canadian village and later in the quaint city that is Quebec. Through her we see intimately the sturdy folk behind the scenes only glimpsed by the tourist. Blithe courage and a bit of pathos lend reality to the story and endear its characters to the young reader.

F. S. S.

Grandmother's Doll (106 pages). By Elizabeth Gladwin Bouton. Duffield & Green. \$2.50.

Here is another doll story which any imaginative little girl will love reading. In the diary of a Victorian doll, found in the attic of an old country house, is chronicled the life of little girls of long ago, their happy family setting and their adventures with other children. The illustrations and format have charm and distinction.

C. F. B.

Our Children, and Girls and Boys. (25 pages). By Anatole France. Illustrated by Boutet de Monvel. Duffield & Co. \$3.00.

A noted author and a distinguished illustrator combine most happily in a new edition of these charming stories of childhood. An exquisite flavor of France pervades these tales, but despite their remoteness and old-world atmosphere, despite their astute philosophical interpolations, the stories do have interest for our own children by virtue of their very humanness. The six-year-old will not understand all the words, nor appreciate the implications thereof, but will sense, nevertheless, the beauty and sincerity of the gentle philosopher's thoughts about children.

J. F.

A Rich Variety for Intermediate Readers

The Dutch Cheese. (75 pages). By Walter de la Mare. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.

Two of this beloved author's lovely fantasies are here published together in a pretty edition. The imaginative child will love these frail bits of fairy world. The stories have a quality of tender melancholy and their lyrical prose is well matched by Dorothy Lathrop's delicate illustrations.

J. F.

The Truce of the Wolf (and other stories of Old Italy). (125 pages). By Mary Gould Davis. Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$2.00.

The author has gathered these old Italian legends from the lips of the peasants in the hill towns of Italy. They are appealing stories, combining magic, religion and human interest. The gentle St. Francis tames a wild boar and saves a village from terror. Nanni, a donkey, rescues the dear padre who had fallen. A witch turns a fair lad into a cow, and a princess marries a boar, who, in turn, becomes a prince. The legends are steeped in the atmosphere of sunny Italy.

E. G.

The Magic Loaves. (192 pages). Adapted By Hope Brister. The Macmillan Co. \$1.00.


In this small volume of folk tales from Herodotus, most charmingly retold, the old-fashioned virtues of loyalty and courage come into their own; youth fights its undaunted way to final victory; selfishness and greed are inevitably defeated. This by no means signifies that there is lack of robustness

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and vigor in the stories, or that the characters are not red-blooded individuals. The "young man and woman" just emerged from the complete safety of the nursery world, avid for a larger experience, will find delicious stimulus in these heroic endeavors of an earlier time. S. B.

Cranes Flying South. (235 pages). By N. Karazin. Translated by Magdalen Pokrovsky. Doubleday, Doran Inc. \$2.50.

This is a translation of an unusual Russian story. It follows the adventures of the crane leader and his two children in their flight from Moscow to Egypt. Throughout the journey the two older cranes, instructing the young ones, philosophize about war and peace and human relationships. The book is rich in beautiful descriptions of the country over which the cranes travel, and while it cannot be taken too seriously, there is, nevertheless, some information concerning the habits and flight drama of these interesting birds. R. E.

The Willow Whistle. (144 pages). By Cornelia Meigs. The Macmillan Co. \$1.75.

An historical story of the days of the early settlement of the West, wherein Mary Anne and Erik have some interesting adventures with Indians, and in particular with their young friend, "Grey Eagle." Again this much loved writer for children has given us an absorbing tale, which, though simply told, has force and character, and a pioneer background that is vivid and well drawn. The successful illustrations are by E. Boyd Smith and add charm and interest. I. P. B.

Waterless Mountain (212 pages). By Laura Adams Armer. Longmans, Green & Co. \$3.00.

Out of the arid waste of the Arizona desert has come this beautiful tale of the Navaho. All the dignity, all the imagery, all the religious stirrings of the race breathe through this moving story of a Navaho boy whose heart throbs to the song of his people. The tale is steeped in the legends and traditions of an age-old people, but is none the less a living picture of tribal life in the desert today. The story moves simply and with fine dignity and its background has the ring of authenticity. The author's illustrations are of a mystic beauty—suitable accompaniment to her limpid, poetic prose. J. F.

Gao of the Ivory Coast. (121 pages). By Katie Seabrook. Coward-McCann, Inc. \$2.00.

The customs, habits and folklore of the "Ivory Coast" are skillfully interwoven in this realistic story of an African boy, temporarily adopted into the author's household. The story is told with charm and a simplicity which makes it suitable, though one vivid description of a jungle killing might rule out the book for a sensitive child. H. H. S.

Son of the Whiteman. (318 pages). By Herbert Best. Doubleday, Doran & Co. \$2.00.

Here we have another lively story of boyhood adventures in Africa, done with all the background and understanding of tribal life that characterizes the writings of this author. The young reader will be fascinated by the fourteen-year-old hero, with his zest and his surprising judgment in each and every emergency in his intimate contacts with native life and ancient rites. F. S. S.

Bunny, Hound and Clown. By Dhan Gopal Mukerji. E. P. Dutton & Co. \$2.50.

This is an interesting collection of Hindu fables in which lively animal stories interpret age-old wisdom. The author,

beloved for his "Gay Neck," "Kari, the Elephant," and other fine writings, has a deep understanding of his own folklore. His profound desire for greater international understanding underlies this effort to retell, in English, these tales which are rooted so deeply in his own childhood. F. S. S.

Boy of the South Seas. (193 pages). By Eunice Tietjens. Coward-McCann, Inc. \$2.50.

This book presents a rarely fine tale of boyhood adventure, against a romantic background of Moorea and Tahiti. The characterization of the young native hero is both convincing and appealing, picturing his transition from the superstitions and traditions of his ancient race to the white man's regime. The whole story is replete with the atmosphere of these mystic isles already made known to older readers by Melville and Somerset Maugham. F. S. S.

The Iron Horse. (37 pages). By Adele G. Nathan and Margaret S. Ernst. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.00.

Here we have a brief, dramatic review of the history and development of locomotion from the earliest days of the stage-coach and the covered wagon up to the great engine which pulls the Twentieth Century today. By means of thirty-seven photographs and a wisely selected historic account, the authors have given a vivid picture of the progress of transportation in America. C. F. B.

Widening Horizons for the Junior High School Reader

Cruisers of the Air. (308 pages). By C. J. Hylander. The Macmillan Co. \$2.50.

Here is a book which tells with authenticity and enthusiasm of the development of lighter-than-air craft, following its history from inventor to inventor, and from country to country. Amazing feats, personalities and scientific facts are recorded with precision and zest, always emphasizing the value of airships as transports and scientific aids, rather than their war-time uses. The book holds much of the information that the air-minded youth of today is so eagerly seeking. J. A. B.

The Omnibus. Jules Verne. (822 pages). J. B. Lippincott Co. \$3.00.

Four famous stories "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," "Around the World in Eighty Days," "The Blockade Runners" and "From the Earth to the Moon and the Trip Around It"—are combined into one volume which, though somewhat overwhelming, will undoubtedly be welcomed by many. These splendid yarns of adventure and imagination were written for our parents, yet they will appeal to our children for their thrills. The young reader will be interested in the fantastic, semi-scientific visions that anticipated recent inventions and will enjoy, too, some of the real picturization of a by-gone day. H. H. S.

By Dog Sled for Byrd. (192 pages). By John S. O'Brien. Thomas S. Rockwell Co. \$2.00.

The surveyor for the Byrd Antarctic Expedition, tells the thrilling story of a three-months' dog sledge trek across eight hundred miles of unknown icy wilderness. It is an epic tale of heroism and endurance and perseverance that is told with a hero's modesty and an author's graphic powers. H. H. S.

Heroes of Civilization. (347 pages). By Joseph Cottler and Haym Jaffe. Little Brown & Co. \$3.00.

Inspiring and informing is this account of thirty-four men and one woman who have advanced civilization by their

courageous work. Five important fields are represented—exploration, pure science, invention, biology and medicine. Each hero has been included for some vision which impelled him to work unselfishly for humanity. The accounts are clearly and dramatically written, and include many homely little incidents in the childhood of the heroes which tend to vivify the accounts for child readers. E. G.

Stonewall. (255 pages). By Julia Davis Adams. E. P. Dutton & Co. \$2.50.

A life of Stonewall Jackson, showing the orphaned little boy, the determined young West-Pointer, the ambitious young lieutenant, the courageous, beloved general who gave his life for a lost cause. This biography of a picturesque American is decidedly thrilling to read, and gives an account of the Civil War from the Southerner's point of view, vigorous and illuminating, and happily, entirely unsentimental. H. H. S.

Beethoven, Master Musician. (290 pages). By Madeleine Goss. Doubleday, Doran & Co. \$2.50.

With fine economy and restraint, Miss Goss has vivified for us the character and achievements of this great man, and has also recreated the epoch in which he lived, and the outstanding artists who influenced and were influenced by him. In this biography we share his hardships and frustration which were so large a part of his outward existence, and we see how, nevertheless, his inner life went on undisturbed, expressing itself in music of rarest serenity. The reader from twelve on cannot fail to be deeply stirred by this vivid and sympathetic interpretation. S. B.

A Happy Boy. (142 pages). By Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. The Macmillan Co. \$1.75.

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In the Magazines

The Biologist's Point of View. By Dwight Elmer Minnich. *Birth Control Review*, August 1931.

A summary of Professor Minnich's address at the National Conference of Social Work, June 1931, wherein he emphasizes two aspects of the problem of birth control: defective heredity and population.

The Demand for Psychological Counselors in Education. By Goodwin Watson. *Mental Hygiene and the College.* By Frankwood E. Williams, M. D. *Mental Hygiene*, July 1931.

The course and educational procedure for the training of counselors is outlined, with an account of the initial survey on which it was planned.

Dr. Williams indicates the levels on which mental hygiene work is and may be done at colleges. He compares the untrained subjective approach with the psychiatrically trained objective approach.

Connecticut Bends the Twig. By Adelaide Nichols. *The Survey, Graphic Number*, September 1, 1931.

An interesting educational project, carried on at the Norwalk Schools in collaboration with the Bureau of Character Education Research of Connecticut State Board and the Yale School of Education, and having as its aim character development.

Peace Versus the Tin Soldier. By Farnsworth Crowder. *The Survey, Graphic Number*, September 1, 1931.

The writer points to the inconsistencies of the moral ideals of teaching and the "worldly extra-curricular classroom" with its contradictory code and its effect on youth and his attitude to world wide peace.

How Heredity and Environment Affect Your Child. What To Expect of the Pre-School Child. By Bess V. Cunningham. *What Is Parent Education All About? The Parent Faces a New World.* By Benjamin C. and Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg. *The Parents Magazine*, September and October, 1931.

In the September issue Dr. Cunningham illustrates, from case records of one hundred babies one year old studied in the Educational Clinics of the Institute of Child Research, how inheritance and environment interact, and discusses the powerful influence of environment on native traits. Continuing in her second article, Dr. Cunningham gives

the age level of learning from infancy to school age. Experimentation by the child in the learning process is pointed out as an important factor.

Dr. and Mrs. Gruenberg in their articles emphasize skills, or methods of approach, as behavior influences, but stress "directing the thought of men and women toward the more fundamental questions of human nature . . ." a questioning aspect of the social and scientific changes, and "possibly re-appraisal of our traditional attitudes and practices." In the subsequent paper, Dr. and Mrs. Gruenberg define the social and economic world changes, their effect on home situations and the parents' reaction to these changes.

The Machine Age and the Future of the Nursery School. By William F. Russell. *Childhood Education*, September, 1931.

An account is given of past and present changes affecting the home and, in consequence, public education, "extending the school downward to the nursery . . . and upward into adult life to teach the parent." The author ventures a glimpse into the parent-child-school world of 1950.

Athletics and Your Boy. By Alfred E. Parker. *Health and the School.* Edited by J. Mace Andrews. *Hygeia*, September and October, 1931.

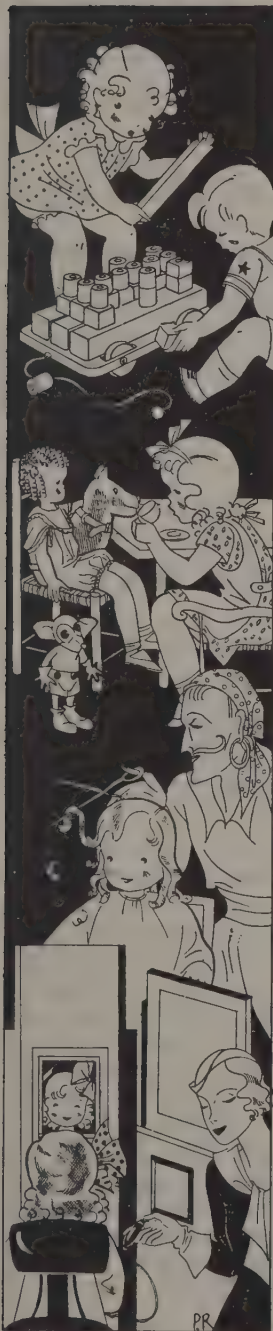
Not less, but "better supervised and more sanely prepared for athletics" is Mr. Parker's contention. Danger signs are pointed out and an appeal is made to parents to assume their share of responsibility. Under "Health and the School" are reports by Helen P. Taussig, Sybil Foster, Ruth Pierce Kenyon and Edna F. Robinson, on methods of mental hygiene procedure in individual schools.

Learning to Talk. By Beth L. Wellman. *Education for the Individual.* By Bess Goodykoontz. *The Happy Family.* By W. E. Blatz, *Child Welfare*, October, 1931.

In "Learning to Talk," the author mentions conditions which make for the development and progress in the mastery of language.

In the same issue Bess Goodykoontz describes "what schools can do to develop and maintain worthy learning activities of the individual."

The paper by W. E. Blatz considers family adjustment in its intimate family setting and from the angle of social changes and conditions.



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Parents' Guides to Children's Books

(Continued from page 83.)

ever favorites, since "childhood is as it always was." "The most obtuse must see that what filled the young of two generations ago with admiration and enthusiasm, will appeal to the young of to-day There is abundant food for reflection in the thought that Ulysses watched Telemachus playing at tug-of-war with the neighbor boy, that the children of Alexandria in the days of Ptolemy bestrode a stick that served as horse, that the youngsters who saw Stephenson's invention played for awhile at steam-engines then tired and went to the old games, that the Inca youngsters told a tale of Cinderella, that young Apaches played mumble-peg. Such facts mean much if pondered."

The thriller, too—the so-called "dime novel"—has its passionate defenders. In a humorous sketch of his own boyhood adventures in reading, Irvin Cobb makes an earnest *Plea for Old 'Cap Collier*. Writing of the days when he was regularly spanked for the juvenile crime of reading the forbidden "nickel libraries," he says:

"Each time, having been paddled, I was admonished that boys who read dime novels—only they weren't dime novels at all, but cost uniformly five cents a copy—always came to a bad end, growing up to be criminals And I was urged to read books which would help me shape my career in a proper course. Such books were put in my hands, and I loathed them. I know now why, when I grew up, my gorge rose and my appetite turned against so-called classics. Their style was so much like the books which older people wanted me to read when I was in my early teens. . . .

"We might have told our parents, had we but the words in which to state the case and they but the patience to listen, that in a 'nickel library' there was logic and the thrill of swift action and the sharp spice of adventure. There, invariably, virtue was rewarded and villainy confounded; there, inevitably, was the final triumph for law and for justice and for the right We might have told them that though *The Leather-Stocking Tales* and *Robinson Crusoe* and *Two Years Before the Mast* and *Ivanhoe* were all well enough in their way, the trouble with them was that they mainly were so long-winded."

Nevertheless, the humorist ends on a note of regret that those "dollar-sized dime novels—greatest adventure stories that were ever written": *Huckleberry Finn* and *Treasure Island*, never found their way into his youthful hands. Here the iconoclast confesses the need for adult intercession in behalf of children's reading, in order that youth

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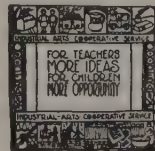
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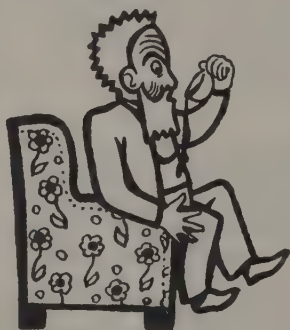
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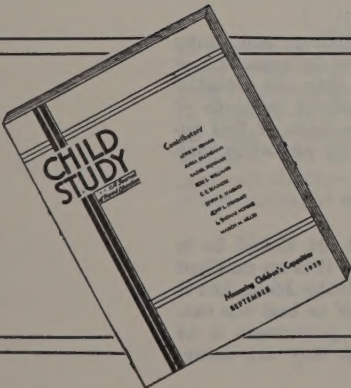
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The Editors' Page



Are all children potential artists?

WE cannot answer the question without knowing what we mean by art. We do not need an iron-clad definition, but only a suggestive one.

ART is any satisfying objective condition produced with hand, body, voice or mind, in answer to an impulse or interest, provided that the satisfaction is completed in the act of perceptual realization. Or, more simply, works of art are man-made things that are satisfying when they are merely seen, heard or felt. In consequence the actual range of art is enormously great. To stretch oneself is merely pleasant; but to feel the poise and rhythmic whole in the act of stretching is to make a living statue. There comes of this something between the satisfactions in sculpture and the dance. So, to see a shady tree on a summer day may be refreshing merely; but to appreciate its proportioned grace and power is to be an artist at least with the eye.

NOW it is obvious that all children, and adults as well, are potentially capable of such realized feelings, and of more or less skilled manipulation. Therefore they are potential artists. The vital question is not "*Can* something be made of this potentiality?" but rather, "*What* is to be made of this potentiality?" That is less a question of deliberate education than of social conditions.

THE best way to realize what art should be in the community is to compare it with athletics. It is an excellent thing to watch Babe Ruth, or Bill Tilden, or Bobby Jones, but it is still better to play baseball, or tennis, or golf as best one can. The person who can best appreciate the best performers is he who feels into them and definitely sees what they are doing, through an awareness of his own efforts.

THE same is true of art. It is well to look at the works of the masters, but it is much better to make little masterpieces of one's own. The two things belong together. Then one no longer looks at things in museums dutifully, but eagerly. One is a freeman in the democracy of art.

FAR too great a tendency is found to make art educative and to think of it as something that one ought, as a duty, to concern oneself with. But art for culture's sake is art for snobbery's sake, and the things so experienced are not assimilated to the realities of one's life as are those things in which the interest is real and impulsive as well as acceptable. Culture is a resultant and not a purpose. Unless it is produced by genuine interests it is no more than manners. Art for culture's sake is as valid as food for the sake of table manners. In both instances dummies will serve the purpose just as well as the real thing.

THE analogy to athletics indicates more rightly what the conditions should be. Art has to do with felt, perceived rhythms and poises, in one's own body, as in the dance, or in other bodies and in things, as in painting, sculpture, the drama—even as athletics and games are concerned with our positive physical and mental activities treated as ends in themselves. Art which is to be important must be authentically desired. Whether art is to be a native and genuine thing or something exotic and pretentious, depends on social purposes and directions.

QUESTIONS of children's art are then questions of envioning conditions. Only exceptional children persist in doing things that are not encouraged by the milieu. The socially most important art in a really civilized society—if such a society be possible—will be authentically stimulated amateur art, just as what is athletically important, on the whole, is amateur athletics. But to make this sort of thing effective will require profound changes in our economic and industrial practices and in our notions of intellectual and social honesty.

Leo Stein

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